ITraining

PODCASTING First episode examines landscape changes **09**
INTERVIEW Claire Line believes learning should be in context **12**
STRATEGY Evaluation of training should not be skipped **14**
QUALIFICATIONS Government locks down security training **17**

Autumn 2008 **www.bcs.org/ittraining**

All parts together

Project and programme managers need to make sure the various parts come together on time, but do both need the same training? **p26**



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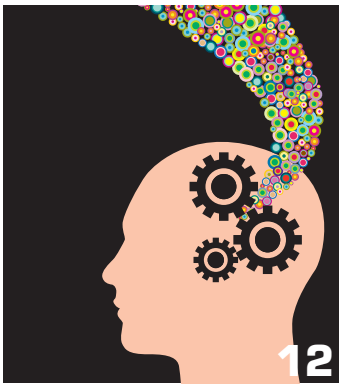


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Live events need more emphasis on participation.

IT Training made it into the charts



Having grabbed your attention with the headline, I'm going to cheekily slip in a couple of other paragraphs before telling you how IT Training achieved fame on iTunes.

I have a request to make – could you please spare a few minutes to fill in the IT Training readership survey at **https://surveys.bcs.org/ittraining/**. Your responses will be used to make sure we provide you with the sort of information you're interested in – with the caveat that we'll go with the majority view.

As well as your opinions on the quarterly printed edition of IT Training, the questionnaire covers the IT Training e-monthly and the recently launched IT Training podcast. Now that's the cue for me to link back to tell you about our chart hit.

Shortly after we launched the IT Training podcast in June, it spent several days loitering in the iTunes Tech News Top 100 charts, which are based on the number of new subscribers to a podcast. I admit that it may be a fairly niche category on iTunes, but being in any charts is still something of an achievement, n'est-ce pas? If nothing else, it makes for a good headline.

The format of the podcast is two industry experts discussing a topical theme or two, ending with a lighter section. In the first podcast, David Pardo managing director of Pardo Fox, which runs the IT Skills Research programme, and Bill Walker, a director at Xpertise Training, talked how to address an economic downturn, and what they would put in Training Room 101. To find out what and why, do listen in. In fact by the time you read this, our second and even third podcasts should be ready too. **www.bcs.org/podcasts/ittraining**

With the launch of the podcast, IT Training has embraced web 2.0. However, should I call it web 2.0? In Gary Flood's article this month, he points out that web 2.0 is jargon that won't engage users. Instead, we should use terms they can relate to, such as collaborative learning. So, even with new technologies, we have to apply traditional principles – in this case making sure that your users are onboard and understand what you are doing.

That brings me nicely round full circle to my first point. To keep you onboard with what we are doing with the publication, please fill in our readership survey. I know I'm going on about it, but you may have forgotten in your rush to listen to the podcast.

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ITtraining

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Institute of IT Training

BCS



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Institute of IT Training

Update

A round-up of the latest news and developments for IT training professionals

Ten years of ECDL: almost two million trained



BCS has celebrated the 10th birthday of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). Almost two million people have taken the qualification in the UK and it is now offered by 2,500 organisations. To mark the anniversary, PC mouse toured the UK from London to Edinburgh.

Training budget cuts are likely to hit team building and soft skills development the hardest with technical skills training and leadership development least likely to suffer, according to research by leadership development organisation, Common Purpose.

The report found that almost half of the training and development professionals surveyed are expecting a budget cut of 20 per cent or more.

Over half of respondents stated that the short-term cost benefits of training cuts and re-prioritisation will have long-term negative consequences.

Julia Middleton, chief executive of Common Purpose, said: '[Cutting training] sends a pretty clear message to the people whose talent is the most highly valued, that the organisation's commitment to their learning and development is short-term and wafer thin.'

Funding for **IT and computing courses** is set to suffer at degree level. Government funding for second degrees or degree level qualifications in IT and computing will be dramatically curtailed, as of this September. The government is specifically exempting science, technology, engineering and mathematical subjects from the changes to its funding, but does not officially include IT/computing among that list.

BCS is warning that removing funding, making candidates pay for themselves, will deter significant numbers of people entering the sector.

IT is already struggling to attract undergraduates studying non-IT subjects because of a perception that IT jobs are boring, according to a recent survey by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation. The research showed, however, that both IT and non-IT undergraduates think the future for the IT sector is bright.

The future was the topic of five essays published by the University for Industry (UfI) to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its establishment and the setting up of learndirect. The five essays on the future of workplace skills in the next ten years will stimulate thinking – none more than Professor Lord Winston's piece on Changing the Brain's Anatomy.

UfI's Dick Moore, director of technology, focuses on advancements in both the digital PA and in artificial intelligence to build a scenario that takes just-in-time learning to a new level. Ian Pearson, a futurologist, paints a picture of massive change in the world of work but emphasises that we will increasingly value playing music, painting, acting and sports.

Finally, Wendy Hall and Nigel Shadbolt, two professors from the University of Southampton, and both BCS Past Presidents, argue that the web will change the nature of work, and that it will comprise a substantial content repository that is available for all; they conclude that the web is the most interesting learning technology yet developed.

The essays can be read, free of charge, in pdf format.

If you wish to influence the more immediate future, e-skills and the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) Foundation are both looking for input into their **competency frameworks**.

Consultation has begun to develop version 4 of SFIA. Everyone who has an interest in IT skills can comment on the existing skills definitions and make suggestions for new content.

The consultation will run through to September and SFIA version 4 is due to be released before the end of 2008.

The SFIA Foundation has also gained a new, fifth, member – the forum for IT Service Management professionals (itSMF). Other members are BCS, IMIS, The IET and e-skills UK.

The latter is inviting comment on its draft training framework for the IT profession from employers and other stakeholders with an interest in the UK's IT professional skills pool.

It is aiming to establish the IT Professional Competency Model (e-skills PROCOM) as a training framework for organising courses and qualifications by the IT profession disciplines. Built on IT professional National Occupational Standards, and linked to SFIA, PROCOM defines knowledge, understanding and competencies for seven broad disciplines at five levels of progression.

The consultation is open online until 19 September.

19 September is also the closing date for entries to The World of Learning **Awards** 2008. They will be presented at on 19 November in Birmingham.

Supplier briefs

Xpertise to acquire Parity Training

Xpertise has announced its intention to buy Parity Training, subject to shareholder approval.

The acquisition would create the second largest IT training company in the UK. Last year, Xpertise's revenue was £22.3 million and Parity's £18.6 million. The largest UK training company QA-IQ had estimated revenues of 63 million in 2007, while its nearest competitor in revenue terms was Learning Tree with £23.6 million.

QA-IQ appoints CEO

QA-IQ has a new CEO, William Macpherson, who took on the role on 9 June.

Outgoing CEO John Kauffman will remain on the board of QA-IQ Group as a non-executive director and as an investor and shareholder in the business.

Until recently, Macpherson was the chief executive of Kaplan Professional and International, a learning services organisation with sales in excess of US$500 million. He began leading training companies in 1995 when he became chief executive of Financial Training.

Learning Tree for sale

Learning Tree International is soliciting offers to purchase the company. The company, which has its headquarters in the US, has an IT training business in the UK with a turnover of £23.6 million in 2007.

Learning Tree president and CEO Nicholas R. Schacht said: 'We believe this is an appropriate time to solicit offers to determine if a sale is the best way to maximise shareholder value. A sale would also address the desires of our two founders, who remain our principal shareholders, for diversification and liquidity to accommodate their charitable interests.'

Learning Tree says it has not ruled out either continuing as a stand-alone company or pursuing some other strategic alternative.

Remarc moves into managed services

Training provider Remarc Technologies has formed a managed services division to source local training for its customers in IT security, virtualisation and routing.

Remarc says it will provide a training sourcing service from accredited partners in products and technologies such as ethical hacking, Cisco routing and VMWare – all without booking or monthly fees

Cisco launches CCNA options

Cisco has added three new entry level concentrations to its certification portfolio: CCNA Security, CCNA Voice and CCNA Wireless.

Training company Global Knowledge commented that the new certifications build on the core CCNA skills and provide a clear path for individuals wishing to specialise in a job role within the wireless, security or voice technologies.

Cisco has also unveiled the Cisco Learning Network, a web 2.0 community that enables networking professionals to collaborate globally through document sharing, open forum discussions and idea exchanges in a dedicated environment.

Next ITIL v3 steps scoped out

The ITIL Qualifications Board has confirmed that, for ITIL v3 qualifications, the Service Lifecycle and Service Capability Modules and Managing Across the Lifecycle will be known officially as ITIL Intermediate Certificates. The advanced level will be called the ITIL Master Certificate.

Examinations in the 10 intermediate certificates, including the mandatory consolidation certificate, Managing Across the Lifecycle, will go live for candidates in two batches, in October 2008 and January 2009.

New project related qualifications

APMG is expanding its qualifications related to project management.

In June, it launched the APMG Programme & Project Sponsorship (PPS) qualification, which will measure the leadership of programmes and projects at sponsor level. The qualification is based on a series of executive briefings developed by ILX Group for the Home Office. The syllabus is methodology independent and uses generic terms as far as possible.

APMG has also announced a qualification scheme to accompany OGC's new Portfolio, Programme & Project Office (P3O) Guidance. It is aimed at support offices.

A Foundation exam will be available when the guidance is published in the autumn and a Practitioner qualification will follow.



Alan Bellinger

The next ten years

Ufi/learndirect's five essays crystal balling the next ten years (see news, p6), make a good read, but don't go far enough.

Transferring skills through the use of IT – and creating an eco-learning environment within the organisation – is a major issue right now. What is needed more than anything else is to create a road map that will reduce the current confusion.

The problem is that there are so many tools out there that it's tricky to sort them out; can you tell a Moodle from an LMS? We need a meaningful structure so that we can give them form and structure – and then prioritise them. For example here's an approach I developed:

- simulation tools and rule-based scenarios;
- performance support;
- virtual labs;
- enterprise content management;
- building communities of practice;
- collaboration tools;
- googlisation;
- social networking;
- FAQ tools;
- competence/talent management;
- performance management tools;
- e-skills portfolio;
- e-assessment.

There's a clear method to this listing: the first four tools make the skills transfer richer; the next group provides learner support during learning interventions; and the final management tools consolidate and report on progress.

Now that's sorted out, we can start to develop the maturity model – the road map that will enable us to implement the programme. The end game is to create an eco-learning environment in which the whole gamut of approaches work synchronously together.

To see the maturity model, go to **www.bcs.org/ittraining/alan/tenyears.** It is split into six stages – non-existent, initial, developing, defined, managed, and optimised. Don't just take it at face value; you can contribute to its evolution because we would welcome your comments and input to fine tune it.

Maturity models such as these are useful; they provide the basis for developing your own road map to prioritise and plan the programme. But beware of them: if you try to implement it from day one until the end you'll die of boredom – and your manager will be frustrated at the lack of value you're generating.

The best way to use a model like this is to identify the end game – and then do some projects that will take you towards the goal. As you complete a project, you can refer back to the maturity model and see what stages you've fast-tracked through, and which you've left behind. The three critical stages are based on the groupings of the tools – richer transfer, learner support and management tools. The more of these you can do synchronously the faster you'll reach the end game.

BCS Information & Technology Training Specialist Group

Group holds its first annual general meeting

The I&TTSG held its first AGM in London on 8 May. Members were welcomed and introduced to the group by the chair Jooli Atkins. She outlined the achievements of the group, including:

- having this regular column in IT Training, which members receive free;
- achieving recognition within BCS by being involved with the BCS IT Trainer of the Year Award and participating in the Strategic Panel of Education and Training Forum;
- publishing a BCS blog which has received a lot of comments;
- organising events on integrating training in IT projects and the remit of e-skills.

Going forward, more events will be organised with regional representation and online possibilities. The relationship with the Institute of IT Training (IITT) will be strengthened.

Simon Perry, membership secretary, presented a summary of the group's membership, which had risen from 86 to over 340 in the first year.

Bruce Nicholls, secretary, ran through the changes to the group constitution to bring it in line with the model constitution agreed by the BCS Specialist Groups Executive. The new constitution was adopted.

The current chair, membership secretary, publicity secretary and secretary were re-elected. Additional volunteer members were requested from the floor and several members will be co-opted onto the committee.

The speaker for the night was Ed Monk from the IITT.



I&TTSG publicity secretary Carol Hulm

Profile

Carol works for the BCS in the Qualifications Division. She is a programme manager working with both the ISEB team and end user qualifications.

This role involves working closely with all qualifications product managers to provide interfaces with new or changing initiatives, which include NHS ELITE and Health and ITIL v3.

Previously, she managed the NHS ECDL programme for the NHS Information Authority, which was confirmed as the largest ECDL programme in the world at the CEO Forum in 2004. Carol was awarded the IT Trainer of the year by the Institute of IT Training (IITT) in 1997 and has since achieved two major awards for learning programmes with WOLCE and the IITT.



Hear it on the podcast

The training company landscape, economic turbulence and choices for the training room 101 were tackled in the first IT Training podcast.

Certain technologies could help companies save money if a recession takes grip, and training in essential skills will help companies when coming out of a recession, according to the podcast participants.

The participants were David Pardo, managing director of Pardo Fox, which runs the IT Skills Research programme and compiles the annual top 50 training company table, and Bill Walker, a director at Xpertise Training. The recording was hosted by Helen Boddy, editor of IT Training.

Walker highlighted virtualisation as one upcoming technology which could help companies save money, and for which he therefore expects training demand to grow.

Pardo, drawing on past experience, said: 'In previous downturns, the companies and technologies that have done well are those in which people can invest to save money. Service management – ITIL – and project management – Prince2 – have tended to survive previous downturns better than the straight technical subjects. These tend to be the skills that underpin the implementation of the kind of large systems that companies perceive as saving money for them.'

Walker said: 'Project management and service management are areas that tend to be kept in-house, and you've got to get that right, particularly when you outsource [other parts of the IT function].

'If you haven't got control of that internally you probably won't get the saving that you want. Or at least if you do get the savings, you won't be able to measure them.'

Walker and Pardo stressed companies ought to carry on training staff, even if the market does swing downwards.

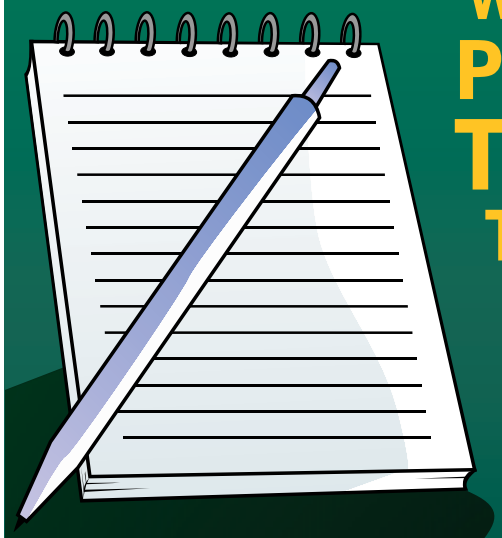
Pardo said: 'If companies are wanting to save money in any kind of downturn, they need well trained people. So they need good project managers so a project can run on time, to budget, and can deliver what it is supposed to.'

To date, however, Pardo said the IT training companies are showing few signs of suffering from the credit crunch.

The IT Training podcast will be recorded monthly with different participants.

www.bcs.org/podcasts/ittraining

ITtraining podcast

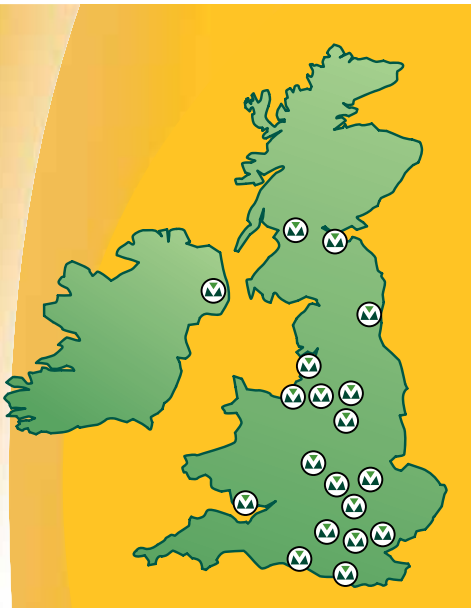


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On the ground

What advice would you give to make sure you retain learner's concentration? We asked trainers to share their advice and guidance.

Three tips for helping people retain concentration are:

Short sharp blasts

Lots of research into how we retain information states that we all learn better in short sharp blasts. We tend to retain information based on primacy and recency. (The first and last things we heard.) This means that the longer the gap in between the beginning and end of the session, the more learning is lost. Sessions of 20-30 minutes at a time are ideal.

You can break up the learning by discussions, reviews or other exercises.

Play music

We all learn better when we are in an atmosphere that is relaxed and comfortable. Learning should be a whole brain and body experience.

We often only think about how to work with the left side of our brain, which is the part ideal for logic. The forgotten side of the brain for learning is the right side. The right side of the brain is more attuned to colour and rhythm.

Playing music while people work, at the beginning or end of the day, is an excellent way to help people take on more information. Classical or baroque music is often considered best.

Have a catchphrase

Another great way to help people concentrate is to have a phrase to focus the group's attention. You can set this up at the beginning of any session by telling the group that when you say the magic words or phrase, you are going to be talking about a really key important point. For example, I ran a course where the participants needed to write an assignment following the training. So as a group we agreed that whenever I said the phrase 'double trouble' they knew I would be talking about a topic where marks would be awarded in the assignment. It helps you as the trainer to work with the learners' subconscious and focus their thoughts at key times.

Richard Armeson,
Remarc Learning & Development

Next issue

What advice would you give on how to approach evaluating IT training straight after a course and longer term?

Breaking developments

How can you help your organisation or customers to create spaces to stimulate informal learning and knowledge sharing between staff?

I believe that, rather than you as a trainer providing content for informal learning spaces, you should encourage users to provide their own.



Use all of the space available in 'informal' spaces to post learning – put up a whiteboard for people to jot down what they have learned or add a notice board with shapes and coloured notes that learners can complete to add information when they are passing.

You could also consider putting up a 'mobile' with key learning points on the ceilings for the people who look upwards when thinking.

Another idea is to have a competition for 'tip of the month' or similar to encourage learners to contribute. You could then use online FAQ pages and forums to get them out to the wider audience, but you must make sure you have the time to keep them up to date.

Technology can be very useful for informal learning. You could send out tips via the company screensaver or splashscreen, or invest in see-through mouse mats that allow you to regularly place a different message inside the cover.

I think it's worth spending a little money on technology that enables you to send out learner tips by Bluetooth – so that all phones with Bluetooth on at the time can receive them.

There's also good old-fashioned favourites that are worth considering too, such as buying mugs for the coffee room that have the main training message printed on them.

Jooli Atkins,
Matrix FortyTwo

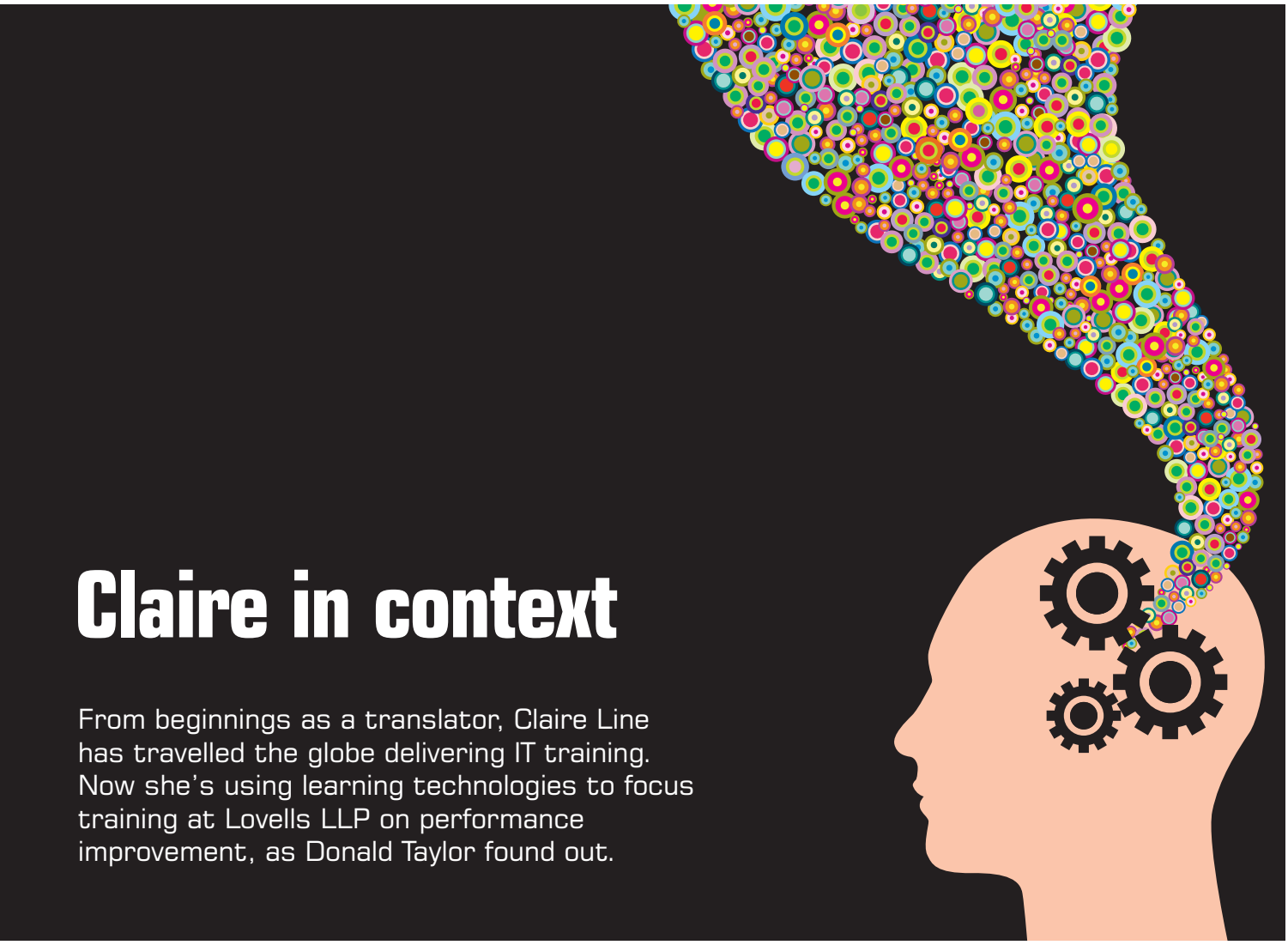
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Trainers: this is your page – please send in your views for the next issue to the editor:
helen.boddy@hq.bcs.org.uk

Advisers: Jooli Atkins, Matrix FortyTwo and Dave Britt, BCS Trainer of the Year 2006.

Next issue

How important is it for a trainer to take part in social networks, write articles, blog and provide informal advice online?



Claire in context

From beginnings as a translator, Claire Line has travelled the globe delivering IT training. Now she's using learning technologies to focus training at Lovells LLP on performance improvement, as Donald Taylor found out.

Claire Line, learning technologies manager at global law firm, Lovells, is passionate about her work. After 17 years in training, she talks with enthusiasm about what she is currently doing and the possibilities for the future. But, she says, she never anticipated training as a career on leaving university.

'I studied languages, and naturally went into roles that would use them,' she explains. Beginning in international market research in telecommunications and IT, then moving into the field of translation for a governmental agency, she joined international investment bank Goldman Sachs in 1991, using her combination of technical and language skills.

'When I was being trained on a new IT system, the head of training mentioned that I asked a lot of questions and asked me if I would be interested in becoming involved in IT training. I had been thinking about doing a PGCE and it seemed like the perfect opportunity. I haven't looked back since.'



You can learn so much from talking to peers in similar situations

Claire Line

Claire soon found herself travelling the world training, including living in New York for several months managing a major training project. She was promoted to senior trainer, then European training manager and finally executive director for global technology training.

In 2003, she joined Lovells LLP, and found the working environment in an international law firm not dissimilar to that of an investment bank. 'Time is valuable and this needs to be taken into account when designing and delivering training,' she says.

Claire loves the international aspect of what she does, but that doesn't mean she spends so much time travelling the world these days. In fact, she has worked to reduce Lovells' trainer air miles.

'One of the first things I did at Lovells was to look into virtual classroom technology,' she says. 'When I joined, almost all training was being delivered face-to-face via training visits, with trainers flying out from the UK. The training service for international offices was not as effective as it could be. Training was too infrequent, and when it occurred, it was too intense.'

Claire focused on increasing accessibility to learning via online courses which were developed in-house. There were challenges developing online learning: none of the training team had e-learning experience. 'We attended e-learning instructional design courses and engaged an e-learning instructional design consultant to set up templates and get us started. He helped with look and feel, navigation and language'.

Claire had been charged with building relationships with heads of other areas of training and she worked closely with the head of legal training to identify ways in which learning technologies could be used for legal training as well as for IT. She became legal and IT training manager in 2005 and spent 18 months learning about legal and legal skills training. Claire was managing two diverse teams which presented a new set of challenges.

'IT training can be a poor relation, far removed from the glamour of leadership and management training,' she says. 'This is something which can, and should, be overcome by ensuring IT training is business focused and is seen to contribute to the bottom line.'

Claire sees the steps she is now taking at Lovells only as the beginning. 'They are part of the way training is evolving,' she says. 'It used to be about the technology whereas now productivity and context are vital to ensure IT training is seen as adding value.

'The trainers spend time talking to learners in the business to understand the issues and challenges they face and get real examples of their work so we can design and adapt training to meet their needs. That way they are more engaged, learn more, and remember more. Putting the learning in context is vital.'

It's all well and good having 'perfect' training examples but they don't reflect reality and the way people work, as Claire found to her cost one day when applying her Excel sort techniques to a double entry book keeping spreadsheet containing non-contiguous data. The 'Undo' tool came in particularly useful that day.

Claire is keen to ensure her trainers have a chance to develop and learn new skills and encourages her teams to attend events and experiment with new areas in training, whether it's using virtual classroom technology or developing e-learning for the first time. For her own professional development, Claire has attended external courses and conferences (as a delegate and as a speaker), and spends considerable time talking to peers and consultants in the fields of learning and development. It is this dialogue with other learning professionals that is an essential and often under-rated way of learning.

The e-learning Network (eLN) is one of her favoured forums. 'It's been a huge networking opportunity and a chance to meet and learn from experts and people in similar positions to me,' she says. Claire has been a member of the eLN committee for the last two years. She has organised a number of events during that time and, last year, was one of the judges for the national e-learning awards.

Over the last few years, when starting out in the area of online learning, she worked with Vaughan Waller and Phil Green, both past chairmen of the eLN. 'They acted as trusted advisors over a considerable period of time and I learnt a lot from them' she says.

Another influence, specifically in the legal sector, has been Fae Longman from city Law firm CMS Cameron McKenna. Fae is one of the founders of the Training Manager Forum which was established in 2000.

'Every quarter, about 25 of us get together at one of the member's offices. Although the meetings are structured, a lot of benefit is derived from the conversations. It's an invaluable way to find out what's happening in the industry, share ideas and keep learning.'

In a way, the forum epitomises Claire's approach. Learning works best when it is engaging, focused on the needs of the delegates, and accessible in a way that works for them. Or, as she puts it: 'It's about being open and sharing information with others, not just taking it. You can learn so much from talking to peers in similar situations, facing similar challenges.'

Claire's areas of focus within the arena of learning and development continue to expand. She has introduced online language training at Lovells, and, more recently, has worked with the client relationship manager for legal training to advise clients on online learning. She is also working with the risk management team to explore the use of online learning for compliance training.

Claire is now turning her attention to performance support for all legal and IT training. It is not just about the 'how do I…', it's about best practice and improving productivity.

Claire Line's career timeline

Studied languages at university, and began her working life as an international market researcher in the field of telecommunications and IT.

1988: Joined Crown Agents as a translator, working on international tender documentation in Spanish and French.

1991: Joined Goldman Sachs, working on presentations in different languages, moved to IT training, rising to executive director for global technology training.

2003: Joined law firm Lovells LLP as global IT training manager, promoted to legal and IT training manager and then learning technologies manager.

IT training can be a poor relation... This is something which can, and should, be over-come by ensuring IT training is business focused and is seen to contribute to the bottom line

Claire Line

Skirting round evaluation erodes value of training



Is your IT training having any effect? Donald Taylor investigates how IT training can be evaluated, and what companies are actually currently doing.

Anyone delivering training faces one essential question: will the work you did today make any difference? Often the question is unanswered.

It is not that models for evaluating the effects of training do not exist. The most famous was articulated by Donald Kirkpatrick in 1959 in a series of articles for the US Training and Development Journal.

Kirkpatrick suggests that there are four levels of evaluation.

Level one is the reaction of the training delegate; level two whether learning took place; level three whether that new learning is being applied in the workplace; and level four whether the application is making any difference.

On the level

The Kirkpatrick model has embedded itself in the language of evaluation used in training today. Training professionals talk of 'only doing level 1' or 'being unable to get beyond level 3'.

Recognising that Kirkpatrick's was the industry lingua franca, US evaluation expert Jack Phillips decided to go one step further in 1992 when he established his ROI Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. Phillips added a fifth level, dealing with return on investment (ROI), which establishes the monetary value of level four and compares it with the cost of the training.

The simplicity of the Kirkpatrick model has led to it becoming part of the learning landscape, but that does not mean that it has been wholeheartedly accepted. And if not everyone agrees with Kirkpatrick, the methodical, the detailed Phillips approach is seen by some as misguided at best. Paul Kearns, author of Evaluating the ROI from Learning (CIPD, 2005), and creator of the Baseline Evaluation System has two objections to the Kirkpatrick/Phillips approach.

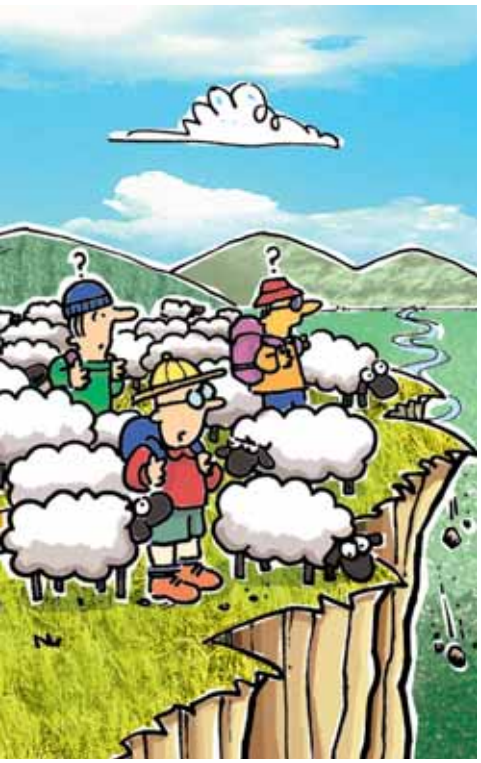
All workplace training objectives should be business objectives and that's where Kirkpatrick and Phillips fall down

Paul Kearns, author of Evaluating the ROI from Learning

'All workplace training objectives should be business objectives and that's where Kirkpatrick and Phillips fall down. They start too late – after the event. Effort should go into understanding the business drivers for training, not justifying the action after the event.'

Clive Shepherd, head of the eLearning Network, agrees with this last point. 'Training is done for business reasons, and business managers want to see a change in

behaviour. It's enough for that to be supported by a credible chain of evidence. Managers aren't asking for scientific rigour, just to be shown that it's believable that training led to learning, used in the workplace, leading to positive change in a targeted business metric.'



Almost without exception, delegates are able to identify specific things they have learnt which have improved their productivity

Tiina Paju-Pomfret, Bupa

Shepherd cautions, though, that this limited chain of causality is actually far more than most trainers are actually adopting. 'Most training is still not evaluated at all. You have to check whether people's behaviours have changed after training. If you don't evaluate at all, then you're not doing the job properly, and you won't get away with that forever.'

Down in the detail

Detailed evaluation of IT training is certainly possible, as VT Shipbuilding found in 2005 when it trained 60 charge hands on end user office applications.

At the end of their training programme, the delegates were able to take on new responsibilities from more senior shop managers and team leaders. One result: cost savings generated by not having to replace departing team leaders.

'But it wasn't only about cost saving,' says training manager Geoff Price. 'There were quality improvements, too. Charge hands started to run regular meetings in a way that took less time, and needed fewer people.

Their increased IT awareness meant they could access information directly, rather than through a costly intermediary such as a draughtsman.'

Using the detailed Phillips methodology, VT Shipbuilding was able to quantify the ROI of this combination of cost savings and improved efficiencies at 140 per cent on the cost of the training.

Question me happy

Evaluation of workplace training effectiveness is not usually so detailed. Usually, it is done through questionnaires issued immediately after a course. Although this level one analysis is frequently mocked as providing no insight into the effects of training, it has at least one valuable use: quality control.

This is the approach of the London School of Economics (LSE), where post-course evaluations are reviewed monthly by the training team and the managers of IT services.

'If the scores are below what's acceptable according to our service level definitions, we ask all the participants for extra, anonymous feedback,' explains IT training manager Jeni Brown. The information gathered can then be used to alter course content, or to help improve training delivery.

The LSE is extending its polling of delegates to pre-course evaluation, as a form of training needs analysis. It is one of many organisations currently expanding and improving its evaluation methods.

Another is the Business Technology Training division of Bupa. It decided at the end of 2007 to go beyond using only level one 'happy sheets' to measure delegates' reactions.

'We wanted both to help delegates take more responsibility for their end user IT training, and to go further towards understanding the value of training,' says training manager Tiina Paju-Pomfret. Bupa re-worded their level one, post-course evaluation forms, and introduced a follow-up evaluation questionnaire sent out four weeks after the completion of training.

The re-written post-course evaluation includes a focus on the relevance of the training to the delegates' work, while the follow-up questionnaire asks for examples of how delegates have changed their behaviour at work. It also asks delegates to estimate how much time has been saved as a result of their new ways of working. Tiina accepts that this is a subjective measure, but adds that the new follow-up evaluations have generated useful information.

'Almost without exception, delegates are able to identify specific things they have learnt which have improved their productivity,' she says, 'and the majority believe that they have saved over 30 minutes per day as a result of attending the training. We can use this to demonstrate the value of training, and also to improve the content of what we offer.'

Is it always needed?

The NHS in Wales similarly asks its IT end user delegates to estimate time savings made as a result of training. In a training project that ended in March, the Welsh Assembly's Informing Healthcare programme aimed to transform the use of IT within the Welsh health service.

Informing Healthcare led an initiative that trained 30,000 people to European Computer Driver's Licence (ECDL) standard over a four-year period

'At the end of the training period – spread usually over 12 months or

less – we asked learners in direct clinical care to assess whether they thought their new skills would increase their productivity and so give them more time with patients, and whether it would result in an increase in the quality of care,' explains research and evaluation manager Daniel Warm.

'Even though many of them had not yet had the chance to put their skills into practice, 28 per cent believed it would result in an increased quality of care, and we expect this number to rise once staff have been able to use the technology.'

Vic Heard, the senior project manager for Informing Healthcare, points out that while the evaluations will continue, IT skills have now been mapped to the NHS-wide Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF).

In future, all employees will receive a regular annual assessment of their skills against job requirements, so that training plans are automatically geared towards organisational needs.

Can't give it away

Should organisations, then, target training using this approach [training according to skills-gap assessment], or use post-course evaluation?

The answer, according to Henry Stewart, managing director of IT training company Happy Computers, is simple: 'The vast majority do neither.'

He points out that even when offered the simplest option – free post-course evaluation as part of a training proposal – most organisations ignore the opportunity.

'We offered 100 clients free evaluation in a trial in 2006," says Henry. 'Only one took up the offer.'

Dr Brian Sutton of QA-IQ agrees. 'We simply can't give it away. Clients are always interested at the proposal stage, and are glad to see evaluation taken seriously, but in the end few of them take us up on the offer.

Clients are always interested in evaluation at the proposal stage... but in the end few of them take us up on the offer

Dr Brian Sutton, QA-IQ

'They prefer to spend the time doing more training.'

Why the general lack of interest? 'Either organisations are confident of the effect of training and don't see the need to prove it.' says Stewart. 'Or once the budget is allocated, they see no need to measure the effect.'

Sutton agrees: 'The cost of training is only ever a fraction of the cost of implementing software, and unlike the implementation they can usually be sure that it will work well enough.'

However, like Shepherd, Kearns cautions against unconsidered training. 'Real evaluation, based on real evidence, transforms organisations. A clear purpose, set right at the outset, before any learning activity is even dreamt of, is crucial. Articulate that, and it will be clear what needs to be evaluated.'

IT training

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Cabinet Office report sounds wake-up call for security training



Security awareness training is often currently a short module in the induction training round. No more: investigations into the recent personal data security breaches in government have led to a decree that security training and awareness must be standardised, tested and given to everyone who handles personal data, as Paul Hansford explains.

In the last three months, a number of reports have been published on the management of information security in government.

They focus directly or more generally, on the recently publicised losses of personal data from government departments.

The principal reports include Poynter (*Review of information security at HM Revenue and Customs* – on the loss of two CDs containing child benefit data), the Burton review (*Report into the Loss of MOD Personal Data* – on the theft of a Royal Navy laptop), and the Cabinet Office report (*Data Handling In Government* which took into account these two others). The Cabinet Office report was followed closely by a paper on *Cross Government Actions: Mandatory Minimum Measures* published by the CSIA, part of the Cabinet Office.

Among their many findings, these reports commonly state that a contributing factor of these breaches was the lack of effective security training and awareness. Their recommendations include mandatory and accountable security training to be given when staff are appointed to key roles in the organisation and annually thereafter – including testing of the learning. And security awareness for all staff who manage personal data.

The Burton report concluded: 'There is an urgent need to review training and education needs and to embed appropriate themes in curricula and training programmes from basic training, through generalist and specialist courses, as "business as usual".'

All departments must ensure that all data users... undergo information risk awareness training on appointment and at least annually

CISA

The Poynter report similarly found that: 'HMRC people lacked sufficient awareness and training on information security matters,' adding that: 'There was a general lack of awareness across HMRC business units, at least prior to the incident, of the importance of information security.'

The response to these and other findings is refreshingly focused. The Cabinet Office report declares that: 'Government will roll out at least a minimum level of information management training to all information asset owners, on appointment and annually, and strategic information management training to accounting officers, senior information risk owners, and members of audit committees. [It will also] roll out at least a minimum level of information risk awareness training to all those with access to protected personal data… Such training will, where possible, take the form of short, e-learning products including tests for understanding, and will be applied on appointment and annually.'

Further underlining this, the CSIA's *Cross Government Actions: Mandatory Minimum Measures* paper specifies that: 'All departments must ensure that all data users must successfully undergo information risk awareness training on appointment and at least annually. In addition, all information asset owners must pass information management training on

appointment and at least annually, and accounting officers, SIROs, and members of the audit committee must pass strategic information risk management training at least annually.'

So there's no question about it: there is work to be done.

Does this apply to me?

The Cabinet Office report's recommendations apply across government and its contractors, as do most of the CSIA's mandatory minimum measures. Even if you don't train in either of those sectors, but your organisation handles personal data, you could consider the recommendations as guidance; the Cabinet Office Report states a 'commitment by government to provide the information commissioner with new powers to conduct 'spot checks', and to introduce new sanctions under the Data Protection Act for the most serious breaches of its principles.'

The training challenges

The standards that government is setting itself and its contractors are far-reaching. Training is only one of them, and this activity alone will require the organisation's IT training, security, HR and legal functions to work together. As well as delivering the training, there will need to be mechanisms linking training and HR to ensure that staff receive the relevant security awareness when they change roles. And staff will need clear legal guidance on the Data Protection Act as it affects directly the way they do their jobs.

Data protection is often seen as an IT security issue – 'It's about protecting data, right?' – and so it may fall to IT trainers to deliver the message. It may be necessary to explain technical measures such as full-disk encryption, encryption for transmission, protective monitoring and the secure destruction of hardcopy and media. The concepts of remanence and aggregation will need to be covered.

But data protection is actually a business and an information security issue; it extends beyond IT. The legal issues are central, as are the HR issues of acceptable use policies and disciplinary procedures. At a time when more and more organisations are moving towards home working, technical security measures can only help so far: staff who work remotely will have to be trusted to maintain physical and procedural security.

And it is key that 'data protection' is understood to mean not only the security of the information, but also its proper usage.

So an effective training strategy will need to involve not just IT trainers, but other subject experts in your organisation.

Finally, the Cabinet Office has stated that it will: 'Provide a minimum specification for this training and seek views from departments as to whether they would wish to use a standardised training product. The aim should be to develop training material that can be externally accredited and transferred between organisations, and integrate material into relevant courses run by external bodies.'

When government publishes its specification, organisations may develop training to address that. Well and good but government can do no than this, and encourage departments and their contractors to ensure their training effort is effective. Informational or instructional training may demonstrate compliance and due diligence; it can enable staff who currently simply do not understand their responsibilities when handling personal data.

But the awareness aspect of security training is also about challenging the attitudes which produce non-secure behaviours.

The various reports into the personal data security incidents reveal that most arose from failures of procedural security. In some cases, it was down to staff who didn't know what the rules were. Or – like all of us, at one time or another – they simply made a big mistake. But in other cases, it involved a choice to not observe the rules.

The 'senior civil servant' who presumably read, and then left, highly classified documents on the train was subject to security briefings and, in their position, would have known how to handle such sensitive information. What was it that persuaded them it was OK to open those documents on public transport?

As we seemingly become more and more pressured to deliver our work targets, there are plenty of temptations to break the rules – take the work home to finish; email that document; stick it on a CD or a USB.

To really crack the security awareness issue, trainers will need to understand and challenge not just how incidents occur, but why.

An effective training strategy will need to involve not just IT trainers, but other subject experts

Paul Hansford

● Paul Hansford Dip.Infosec CISSP CISMP FBCS is a member of BCS's Security Forum Strategic Panel.

Read all about it

Keiran Poynter: Review of Information Security at HMRC
www.hmtreasury.gov.uk/media/0/1/poynter_review250608.pdf

Sir Gus O'Donnell: Data Handling Procedures in Government
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/csia

CSIA: Cross Government Actions: Mandatory Minimum Measures
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/csia

Sir Edmund Burton: Review into the loss of MoD Personal Data
www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3E756D20-E762-4FC1-BAB0-08C68FDC2383/0/burton_review_rpt20080430.pdf



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Rules help level the supplier field

Making insourcing versus outsourcing decisions are very tough, especially if the decision maker manages the internal resource, says Alan Bellinger. His set of rules can help make sure the decision making process is fair.

When a new L&D project comes up, the immediate issue is should we do this internally or outsource it?

There are a number of projects where the answer is blindingly obvious, so we'll ignore those. It is where it is a close run thing that the tricky issues arise, for example when you need new course materials that are only just outside the experience of your internal team

Everyone will say: 'We must have a level playing field so that we can evaluate it thoroughly.' However, that is much easier said than done. As ever, the devil's in the detail.

Marketing

The first issue to address may seem trite, but it's critical given the way in which supplier relationships have changed in the 21st century. Supplier/purchaser relationships today will be strategic (i.e. a trusted supplier), preferred (i.e. a close working relationship) or transactional (i.e. one decision at a time).

Most strong suppliers will operate a customer relationship management system that has one overriding purpose – to deepen the relationship with the client. And that begs the question: who is the client? Is it the L&D department or is it the business unit within the organisation? Certainly, in the latter case, it means that, unless the internal department is also marketing itself to its stakeholders (i.e. the business units), the level playing field is uneven from the start.

Internal and external suppliers must be working towards the same solution in the same, or at least a similar, way

Alan Bellinger

Rule 1: *Ensure that the internal department is able to market itself at least as effectively as external suppliers can within the organisation.*

Push and pull

There are two forces at play; the first is management push to use internal resources whenever possible in order to minimise costs to the organisation (see section on pricing below), and the second is market pull from business units which believe that the grass is greener outside the organisation, and that

external sourcing will bring benefit – at least to the business unit.

Both positions are extreme and probably have little basis in reality, but the perceptions will exist and do need to be dealt with.

Rule 2: *Neutralise the push and the pull; all parties start as equals.*

Definition of requirements

The next issue to meet the level playing field requirement is to ensure that both internal and external parties are bidding for the same thing. Again, there are two extremes: the first is that everyone is clear what is wanted and that it can be easily defined; the other is that it is ill-defined at the start and the organisation wishes to use the bidding process to clarify outcomes. There's a mid-point as well, and that is when L&D and the business unit don't agree.

Critical issues arise when there isn't a clear understanding – and they revolve around whether to share ideas from one bidder with the other bidders. The usual way of handling this is to have an open questions period (in which all answers are shared), and then to keep all discussions with bidders confidential. The alternative, and much preferable, is to split the bid in two.

The point is this: if you're really not clear what you want then you're really looking for a party that can help to define requirements; and that organisation may not be the best at delivering the solution – so why combine the function anyway.

There are two issues to decide – what are the desirable outcomes, and what is the best way to get there? It's usually on that second point that there's confusion. It is really down to L&D to get clarity on outcomes, and also alignment with the business unit; and then to a trusted adviser to achieve clarity on methods.

Rule 3: *Internal and external suppliers must be working towards the same solution in the same, or at least a similar, way.*



If the organisation has learning objects or a design from a previous project, how should they be treated in order to maintain the level playing field?

Alan Bellinger

Pricing

The core issue is the way in which the internal department costs its work, or, to paraphrase, how do you treat overheads? An external organisation will have overheads to apply to the direct cost of completing the assignment; they'll include sales and marketing, premises and ICT, finance and administration. So, if the external organisation has to apply its overheads to the direct costs, then, to create the level playing field, the internal organisation should too.

But the internal financial accountant will argue that you need to look at it from an overall business point of view. The company overheads and the internal department's fixed costs are there anyway, so only the department's variable costs should be taken into account in the costing as they represent incremental outgoings.

The management accountant, on the other hand, will argue that the basis for costing should be the opportunity costs – what would the internal department have contributed in business value if it had worked on a different project instead?

Rule 4: *Add a realistic allocation of overheads to the internal department's direct costs to get a fair comparison; but temper this with an assessment of whether it is better value for the organisation to utilise the internal department based on actual outgoings or lost opportunity.*

Intellectual assets

This is another tricky one. Here's an example: if the organisation has learning objects or a design from a previous project, how should they be treated in order to maintain the level playing field. In the first instance, the answer is obvious – the assets should be available to the external supplier to use on the same basis of use as they are to the internal department. At least that gives us a level playing field.

But now reverse the situation: the external supplier has assets that it wants to use that it has created from a previous assignment. Do you imagine they'd make them available to the internal department? I'm sure they wouldn't because such assets become their differentiators.

Rule 5: *Intellectual assets that are the basis for content are shared between bidders on a confidential basis, but intellectual assets that relate to the way in which the solution is delivered are exclusively the property of the respective owners.*

Evaluation

So far we've been able to identify what it takes to get a level playing field between bidders; once we have the bids in, the question is how far should the internal department be involved in the evaluation? Logically, the answer is 'not at all'; but we're most likely to find that the people who are best placed to evaluate the different bids are the people within the internal department.

It makes no sense for the organisation to compromise the quality of the evaluation by barring

Who controls the rules?

Setting up these rules is fine, but who should administer them in a procurement? That depends. The options are your procurement department, a senior individual in HR/L&D who is not associated with the internal department, or the commissioning business unit. The best option is to create a virtual team of any two, or three, of these individuals.

internal expertise from the evaluation process. So the questions are:

- Was the internal department very close to the best of the external bidders?
- Does the difference represent value to the organisation?
- Is the organisation compromising value by going with the internal organisation?

Rule 6: *Ensure the most comprehensive evaluation of the submitted bids, and use this evaluation to assess the 'competitiveness' of the internal department.*

Best and final offer

Best procurement practice nowadays seems to be to allow at least two of the bidders to take part in a 'last minute auction' by informing them of the pluses and minuses of their bid and seeing if they wish to change their bid and submit a 'best and final offer (BAFO)'. To maintain the level playing field, neither side should be aware of statements made to the other, and, if it's down to an external and an internal bid at this stage, the external bidder must be reassured of the openness of the final decision.

Rule 7: *Be totally fair (and be seen to be fair) at the BAFO stage.*

Stakeholder management

If the final decision is external, you'll still (almost certainly) need the internal department to manage the relationship with the commissioning department, and the project as a whole.

This may be difficult to achieve if the bidding process has been fraught or the successful bidder's key differentiator can easily be replicated by the internal department.

Rule 8: *Factor stakeholder management on to external costs and ensure that intellectual assets aren't compromised.*

When internal bidders are involved, external bidders fear that the process won't be fair and that their best ideas will simply be highjacked by the internal department

Alan Bellinger

External suppliers

All of the rules so far have addressed internal issues; there's still the external suppliers' position to consider. From their perspective they would always prefer to be in an open competition (i.e. exclusively with other external suppliers). When internal bidders are involved they fear that the process won't be fair and that their best ideas will simply be highjacked by the internal department.

Using these rules as part of the 'rules of engagement' for the bid process will make them visible and will go some way to overcoming those fears.

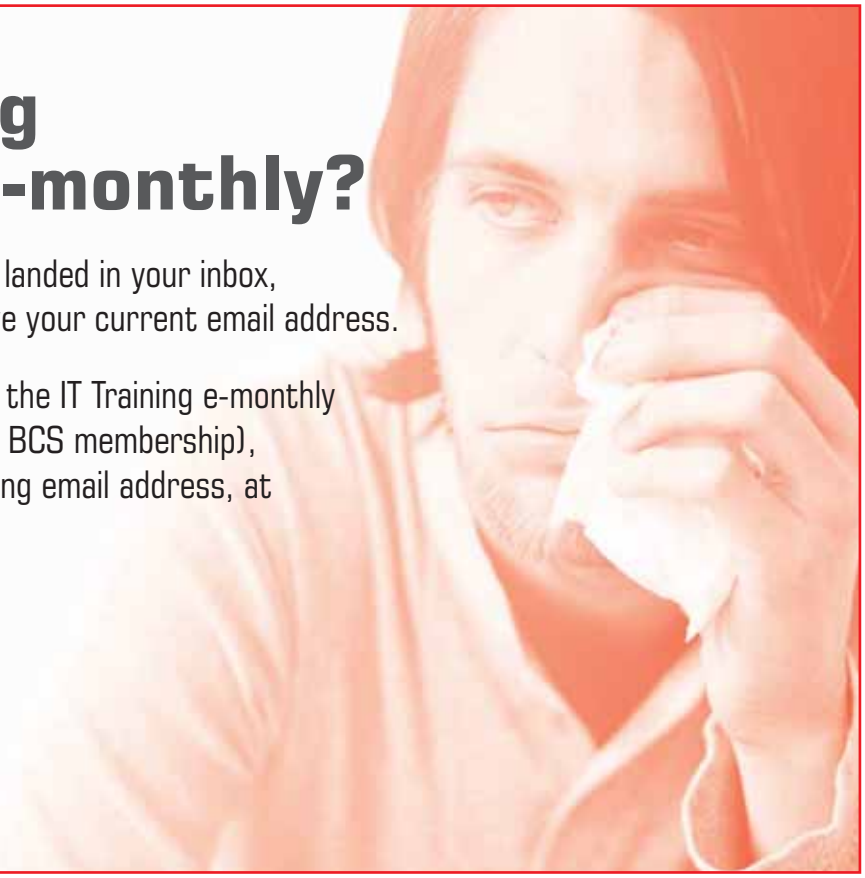
Rule 9: *Ensure full and open communication with prospective bidders on the rules of engagement for the bidding process.*

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Web 2.0 jargon goes into black hole

Do you need to train staff in web 2.0? That's not the point, writes Gary Flood. Terminology, such as web 2.0, masks what is sensible and useful with silly buzzwords. Call a spade a spade and a new way of sharing just that, if you want staff to embrace it.

Had a busy day using your short-range, portable radio telephonic device? I tried to use my ballpoint pen to write down your number, but the small metal ball that is the point of transfer of ink to paper was inoperative. As a result, I utilised some Guinness in the afternoon postprandial timeframe.

Come again? Ah – you mean you had a lot of mobile calls today but your biro wasn't working, so you had a few pints of the black stuff after lunch. Funny how saying something in terms more familiar in everyday language seems somehow much more effective – and also funny, isn't it, how in IT we still seem to prefer the long-winded, techie description?

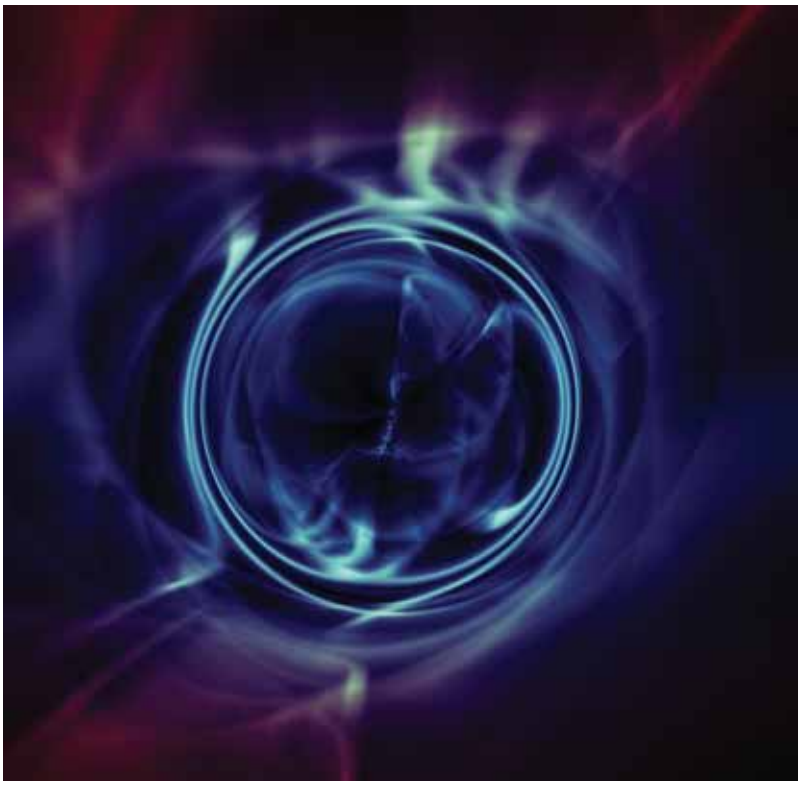
Which brings us to web 2.0, which – let's face it – is a name only a mum could love (for a start, how do you say it – 'web two dot oh' or 'web two'?). For those just back from living in the Amazon, the term refers to the so-say next generation of the internet, considered to be based on a much higher degree of interactivity than the first wave. The thought is that the first burst of online activity was very static – we went to a website and it told us something; but the second wave, web 2.0, is about us doing an awful lot more on a website.

This 'lot more' tends to be around us being much more visible, participatory, 'social' cyber denizens, communicating a lot more with both the people behind said site but also our fellow site visitors. Hence Facebook, the exemplar web 2.0 site, with its emphasis on telling the world and your mum exactly what you did get up to on that gap year, as well as concepts like user-generated and edited encyclopaedias ('wikis'), web diary-keeping ('blogging') and for the more advanced, 'mash ups' (making new websites out of what others supply, information-wise). The emphasis on being 'social' has prompted a more attractive but still less familiar term for this opening up of the web: social networking.



Web 2.0 is really about enabling a new generation of web authors to create content without needing to know anything about the underlying technology

Dharmesh Mistry, Edge IPK



So far social networking has been mainly of interest to 'generation Y' (those between 16 and 25 who have effectively grown up with the internet and are very comfortable using and extending it). And generation Y are now working alongside you, be that in the corporate, public sector or non-profit world. Clearly, there is an implication for the learning and development function here inside organisations. Or is there?

The problem is that there is a big gulf at the moment between what advocates of web 2.0/social networking think folk want to do and what they actually are doing. Let's be precise in spelling out what the Promised Land is supposed to look like, for a start.

'Web 2.0 is really about enabling a new generation of web authors to create content without needing to know anything about the underlying technology,' is the starting point offered by Dharmesh Mistry, CTO of an ecommerce software firm called Edge IPK. Why do we need

that? Because, as he says: 'Ninety per cent of web users are standard male video owners – they don't read the manual and if it doesn't work first time they will move on.'

The idea is that students – be they IT professionals or amateurs wanting to extend their IT skills, or more general users of things like e-learning – will leap with cries of pixelated joy into a highly-interactive medium where they will swap and share experiences, communicate their findings, and generally be massively collaborative, using web 2.0 techniques and tools as supplied to them by their parent organisations.

'There is a great deal of benefit to the organisation from things like constructive blogging,' says Carol Mote, previously a global HR director with a major financial services firm and now head of IT recruitment firm Verdant Futures. Mote says her experience of internally created and driven user forums clearly shows the potential for tapping people's 'intellectual curiosity' and thirst for new ways to share their experiences.

After all, we are all going to be doing a lot more work online, think some experts, so it makes sense to use the medium as effectively as possible. 'We are all likely to be working with colleagues much more over the web as the cost of travel rises,' thinks Karen Moyse, MD of a leadership training firm called Kinetic Futures. 'Tools like video and podcasts are going to be much more in use than actual physical presence. As technology and broadband gets better a lot of training will end up being consumed in forms like two-way video.'

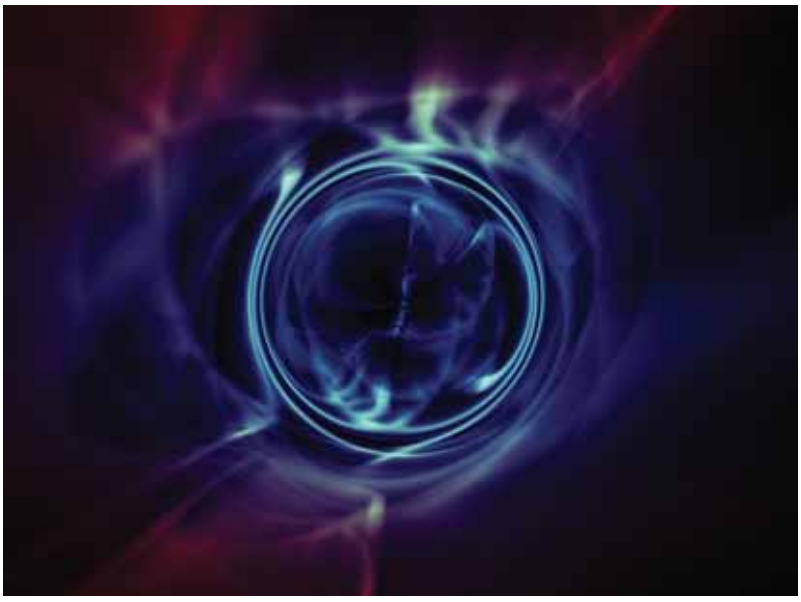
'Companies are interested in web 2.0 because they increasingly have generation Y employees who have expectations not easily met through top-down training interventions and management communications,' says Clive Shepherd, independent e-learning consultant and chair of the eLearning Network.



The biggest uses of web 2.0 will be less formal, as part of the way in which employees commnicate and share information on a day-to-day basis

Clive Shepherd

'They allow people in an organisation to make contact with each other and share expertise without expensive formal systems or a great deal of management time. For example blogs can be used to allow students to maintain a learning journal, wikis can be used as part of a blended solution to allow students to pull together their own content and to pool resources and podcasts can be used as an alternative way to deliver formal content.



'However, the biggest uses of web 2.0 in organisations will be less formal, as part of the way in which employees communicate and share information on a day-to-day basis.'

If that is indeed the target place we want to get to with social networking – let's call it 'next generation learning' – a good question might be how do we start that journey? Are we going to formally teach people about web 2.0 (as in, send them on specific courses as we now do for IT skills, for instance)? Or is it (as the Apple Mac is supposed to be) 'too simple to have to teach' and they'll just pick it up naturally?

Our assumption so far, by the way, is that next generation learning is something 'everyone wants'. In fact, some people think it is a terrible idea, and certainly not one the training community should be associated with – more about that later.

Nonetheless, though there may be challenges getting there, it is also a fact that organisations are already opening themselves up to next generation learning style activities – and say they are doing so in response to changing expectations about what learning and training is all about.

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), one of the world's largest coordinating bodies for professional qualifications, has found web 2.0-style techniques invaluable to engage with students around the world, says its head of marketing promotions Louise Farrow.

'We try to communicate with our learners in the most effective means for them and have found things like live webcasts and ways to post questions and share experiences with other students is really favoured as a way to prepare for our exams.'

The body is exploring blogs, forums, podcasts, SMS messaging and other forms of 'virtual learning' as a cost-effective way of reaching its 325,000 global student base, she adds.

Meanwhile, Madgex, a Brighton-based job-board building specialist, has a definite emphasis on using next generation learning for its staff, according its creative director Glenn Jones. 'Our internal training scheme centres on the idea that 15 per cent of your time at work here should be around your own projects and development,' he says, adding that companies like computer animation leader Pixar have similar benefits.

'We empower our individuals to link to others both in and outside the company to support that, and we have found giving people the tools to do that has really helped our internal "community".'

LexisNexis UK's conferences and training unit has also started on the path of using highly interactive online tools like webinars to help deliver content for its courses, says Fiona Miller, its head of conferences. 'This means from your desk you can engage with the tutor, email in questions, revisit the experience later – we see this as being the first step in much greater interactive delivery.'

The point here is that something like next generation learning is opening up as an option for both learners and teachers – but if we're not careful, we'll end up creating vast amounts of content that no-one will use. Let's face it: we've been here before.

The intelligent way to think about next generation learning, it turns out, is that whatever else you do, don't call it that – let alone web 2.0 etc. Such terminology is almost the kiss of death, as it masks what is sensible and useful – a new way to share stuff with colleagues – with empty IT industry buzzwords.

'We've built big repositories of useful corporate information before that ended up being unused,' warns Brian Sutton, director of learning at QA-IQ. 'Think of all that knowledge management and intranet activity. The problem is that we need compelling reasons for people to use technology – just putting the stuff together for them isn't enough. The "build it and they will come" argument just doesn't apply.'

Tom Nixon, director at social media design agency Nixon McInnes, says: 'These sorts of techniques facilitate peer-to-peer learning, are great to share knowledge and create and retain better "corporate memory" and could reduce the need for external trainers – great. But we need much less emphasis on what web 2.0 is and much more about what it would be like to have a highly interactive common company culture online. I'd like to hear less about sites like Flickr and more about the importance of a good internal network.'

Sutton adds: 'We need to totally de-focus from talking about technology and focus instead on changing behaviour to foster more collaboration.'

Some say we need a lot more than caution about the potential of next generation learning – we need real scepticism.

We need much less emphasis on what 'Web 2.0' is and much more about what it would be like to have a highly interactive common company culture online

Tom Nixon, Nixon McInnes

'We need a real sanity check here,' says Robert Chapman, MD of training firm Firebrand Training. 'At best things like wikis are a secondary support tool – help files on steroids if you like. But any talk of web 2.0 training replacing real-world training is a dangerous idea. Who is the "expert" in this model of teaching? What authority is claimed by that blogger you now believe? There are huge and un-addressed quality control issues here.'

Shepherd concludes: 'Many Web 2.0 technologies have strange names but actually perform incredibly simple day-to-day functions. You don't have to be "modern" or technically orientated to use them. But you do need to be willing to engage with other users and share your expertise - and that will not come naturally to all of us.'

So remember – call a spade a spade, a mobile a mobile, and collaborative learning just that. Or something that appeals to your users even more.

Web 2.0 learning case study – Thomson Reuters

One global organisation that sees serious potential in web 2.0/next generation learning approaches is Thomson Reuters, the new $12bn (£6bn) combination of what were already two of the world's largest news and information agencies.

The newly-merged operation is already looking at embedding web 2.0 technologies and approaches for building organisational capability, according to its global head of learning Charles Jennings.

'We are focused on the following with our learning and development strategy: One, outputs of training and learning, not inputs – i.e. we are looking at ensuring employees improve their ability to do their jobs, not simply improve their knowledge and/or skills. Two, "speed-to-competence" – that is, helping staff get up to speed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Three, we want to use technology – including not just web 2.0 but also web 3.0, the emerging semantic web – to enable us to build organisational capability as efficiently and effectively as possible. Finally, we want to encourage collaborative, personalised learning supported by technology and not formal, rigid, inflexible, instructor-led training – so we want to pull, not push, the greater use of collaborative approaches to learning here.'

Jennings says the move complements his organisation's belief that people learn in the '70:20:10' ratio – that is, the majority of learning is 'on the job,' (e.g. reading guides and manuals), a chunk happens through coaching/feedback and networking (e.g. from one's work colleagues) and just a fraction comes through formal classroom or workshop based learning (or even e-learning).

'It's about a move from training as such to fostering organisational capability,' he says. 'But it is also about not focusing on the technology or terminology, but about becoming a more agile and innovative environment.'



Bringing together many parts on time

Programme and project management both involve coordinating various parts and people. Although some think that programme management is simply project management's big sister, the experts say they require different outlooks, some different skills, and therefore different training, as Helen Boddy found out.

Setting up the criminal records bureau is an example of a programme. It was composed of several interdependent projects that were brought together in order to work more efficiently in delivering the benefits to all the bodies involved – including designing the IT systems, deciding how to apply them, setting up the processes around signatures, creating the office space, and recruiting the staff.

Both project and programmes are buzzwords that pepper the modern business world. In the UK, project and programme management guidance developed by The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) – Prince2 and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) respectively – have become very popular, along with the associated training.

There is often confusion, however, about what the difference is between a project and a programme. Most experts appear to agree that programmes are vision led, typically composed of interrelated projects. Projects, on the other hand, particularly when following Prince2 guidance, are process led with a defined output.



Programme managers who have also taken Prince2 qualifications make life easier for themselves

Melanie Franklin, Maven Training

'Programme management is more than just an amalgamation of projects,' says Anne-Marie Byrne, who is project manager for the refresh of the Prince2 guidance (see next article). 'The MSP definition says that a programme is a coordinated set of projects aimed at delivering a single long term vision.

'A programme can be to develop a new service, or be about achieving culture change, business change, or other long-term benefits.'

Melanie Franklin, CEO of Maven Training, adds: 'The key difference is that programme management ensures changes are made in the operational environment, so that changes can be made by projects.

'MSP is very good because it helps you identify all the pieces of work to get from A to B in a logical, organised way. It tells you where to start. All interested parties are given a role and voice, which is a lot when you multiple the amount of people involved in a project by the number of projects.

'Programmes are usually strategically more important than projects, although not all are strategic. They tend to have a higher profile.

'There is a need for a clear payback from both projects and programmes. A project has a business core, which is the anticipated benefit – usually it is achieved after the project is finished – for example receiving more orders once a new system is in place.

'Once the project team disbands, the users get the benefits. Often, nobody takes responsibility to see if the benefits are realised. Programme management addresses this head on.



It focuses on benefits management and realisation.'

John Woodley, senior consultant on project and programme management at Parity, has yet further definitions to add: 'Projects are around activities and well-defined requirements based on a well-defined process. Projects typically take months, whereas programmes can take years. Projects typically are for a smaller scale of change.

'With programmes there is more ambiguity on how to do them and more ambiguity on what the final outcome will be in terms of your control. There will be more factors deciding the outcome, etc.

'Over the last few years, the government has run a programme to change attitudes to drink-driving to make it unacceptable – it's taken a long time. There have been projects within it such as a TV campaign and a poster campaign. With programmes such as this one it is not always clear when they are finished. And the outcome can even be unclear.'

Skills needed

If programme management is about developing, communicating and delivering a vision, while project management is about process and detail, it's not surprising that some of the skills needed are different, if not all.

'Many of the skills and attributes needed are similar,' says David Reynolds, chair of BCS Project Management Specialist Group and director of business consultancy KatAlyst. 'Both would rate "completion" and "attention to detail" among their key drivers. Both need team working skills, an ability to make judgments based on feedback and advice received from team members and clients.

'The project manager is able to focus attention on a relatively smaller set of influencing factors in order to deliver successfully.

'However, because of the variety of projects within a programme, I would say that a programme manager, in order to deliver confidently, would benefit from both a wider and more in-depth set of experience in different business sectors and project types, and would have an ability to step back and view the overall picture rather than focus on a specific set of project deadlines.

'The ability to harness hard earned experience in differing environments should not be underestimated. The need for strong and agile people handling and influencing skills are more magnified for the programme manager. Balancing the challenges from a variety of different users and internal and external suppliers, requires the ability to speak and quote from real experience.'

Woodley, on the other hand, sees more distinct differences between the skills sets. 'Programme management is about managing change,' he says. 'Project management is about understanding the big change, and delivering the detail. They do need different skills'



While it is difficult to argue against obtaining a qualification, practitioners should beware that this is not at the expense of stifling common sense and creative thinking

David Reynolds, chair of BCS Project Management Specialist Group

The research backs this up, according to Byrne: 'Cranfield University did some research on individuals and aspects that make good programme managers. Good project managers are very output related and set on deadlines. Programme managers need to be more flexible and willing. If a project manager were to be asked to deliver a programme, they would need at least training and probably coaching too, to support them through the change in thinking required.'

Some project managers move successfully into programme management, according to Franklin, but they have to be prepared to be less hands-on. The other group of people who typically take programme management courses are senior managers, operational managers and directors.

'They use the programme structure to achieve change,' she says. 'It gives them a route map. MSP helps break down the process of taking the division to the next level.'

Mark Carr, PPM training manager at Xpertise, also thinks that MSP is ideal for senior management.

'Some project managers convert to it but it's not an obvious career path for a project manager,' he says. 'It is a different set of skills. MSP is more strategic, more about what you want to do, rather than prescriptive. Programme managers tend to have change and leadership skills and recognise the need for change. MSP has transformational flow in it.

'A lot of project managers ask: "What happens if this happens?" Some project managers like the processes and not thinking about what they want to happen. Those doing Prince2 courses tend to be accepting of what the guidance says, whereas those on MSP courses tend to ask a lot of questions.'

Training required

The qualifications that have become the de facto standard in the UK are Prince2 and MSP, both developed in line with the related guidance. Both have Foundation and Practitioner examinations, with MSP also having an Advanced Practitioner examination.

UK training companies report that growth rates for MSP are often outstripping those of Prince2. Nevertheless, project management courses still command much higher attendance, for instance Xpertise sees 10 students on its Prince2 courses, for every two that take MSP.

The focus of the courses reflect the difference in the skills.

'MSP training is about how to develop a vision, and how to sell the better future to the stakeholders,' says Woodley. 'MSP also focuses on strategic benefits – how projects within a programme deliver output. A programme needs projects to deliver outputs and strategic benefits. Outcomes are greater than the individual outputs.

'MSP is also about leading and embedding change. It has the concept of change agents in a "business as usual" environment. Programme management introduces a new way of working to an organisation and helps it stick.

'Prince2 is quite prescriptive, from a controlled start through to controlled closing down. It covers how to understand and document requirements. It focuses on delivering products through time, cost and quality. It gives an indication what to do if a project deviates from the plan.'

Is it worth a project manager studying programme management and vice versa? The experts think there are benefits in, at the very least, having an overview of the other subject.

Franklin says: 'Programme managers who have also taken Prince2 qualifications make life easier for themselves. It is like knowing how to say hello, thank you and goodbye in a foreign language. It smoothes the transition.

'Projects are usually part of a programme, whether project managers know it or not. Programme management courses give project managers a breadth of understanding. They help them see how their hard work on a project fits into context.

'If project managers do MSP, they learn about the programme life cycle, how projects fit together, how to write a better business case and how benefits should be described. They can improve their project from what they have learnt in MSP.'

Reynolds points out that, while it is difficult to argue against obtaining qualifications, practitioners should beware that this is not at the expense of stifling common sense and creative thinking.

'For example, blindly following all elements of Prince2 could well weigh it down with an unhealthy level of control rather than allowing it to blossom. Training courses are not a substitute for real experience.'

Is it worth bothering with project or programme management at all? Woodley sums up: 'Both projects and programmes are there to deliver changes. The rate of change in business is increasing and will only get quicker.

'If an organisation finds programmes and projects difficult, which are both about change, it will struggle to survive.'



Good project managers are very output related and set on deadlines. Programme managers need to be more flexible and willing

Anne-Marie Byrne, project manager for the Prince2 refresh

Prince2 2009 due out in spring next year

The new version of Prince2, Prince2 2009 is due to be released in spring 2009, along with the accompanying updated Foundation and Practitioner qualifications.

The message from Andy Murray, lead author of the new Prince2 2009 guidance, is that the method will not be fundamentally changed from the current version of Prince2, which was last updated in 2005.

'Reviewers have been surprised how little the content has changed in some aspects,' said Murray at the Best Practice Event at the end of June.

'The story is just told in a more accessible way. We have added some extra bits about principles and about environment. We have beefed up some concepts and removed some over-prescriptive bits.

'Many of the comments from the review process have asked to make the books thinner and more accessible, and easier to read. There were requirements to include some new elements, for instance addressing how projects evolve and the continuous negotiation of projects, softer skills and the environment.'

Instead of one book, there will be therefore be two, each of around 275 pages:

1. for those who manage and work in projects
2. for those who direct it.

If someone is considering starting Prince2 now, Murray advises them to go ahead with Prince2 2005. 'If you do the training and learn how to use Prince2, you will be able to use it for Prince2 2009,' he said.

Draft two of the books were due to go out to review groups in July. Feedback will then be incorporated with final sign-off towards the end of the year.

For the qualifications, APMG has just started the consultation with the accredited community and via them the users. There are no plans for bridging qualifications between the two versions, according to Murray. When Practitioners re-register (which they are required to do every five years), they will then become Prince2 2009 registered.

Project updates: **www.best-management-practice.com**



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Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything

Don Tapscott & Anthony D. Williams, 368pp

Atlantic Books, £8.99

ISBN: 978 1 84354 637 5

Rating ★★★★★

As an authoritative analysis of virtual collaboration, as well as a textbook on how industry can harness the power of the internet – especially for R&D – go to this book. The basic premise of Wikinomics mirrors the open source movement. Instead of developing (at great expense) a proprietary product and then incurring the overheads of maintaining and enhancing it, throw it open to the world of developers and let the best material surface for everyone's benefit.

Tapscott and Williams have a word for this community – prosumers – producers who are also consumers. They take the vocabulary further: given that outsourcing is in these times commonplace, they have coined the word 'crowdsourcing' to describe the community of prosumers. I think it encapsulates the concept quite neatly.

I am not so sure about their description of the emerging marketplace for ideas and inventions as the 'ideagora' but you begin to get the thrust of this informative and thought-provoking book.

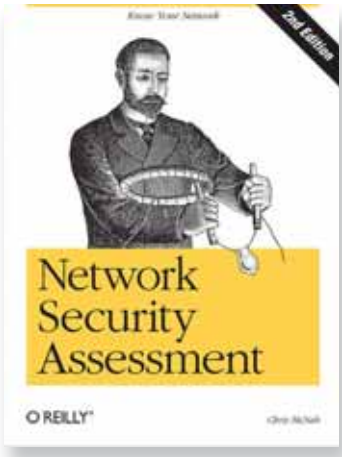
The book covers first the collaborative development of the technology itself – Linux, Apache etc. It goes on to provide examples of how some of the more advanced thinking industries have overcome the hang-ups with ownership of intellectual property and shared their knowledge with the objective of breaking new frontiers of development.

It moves on to solving major global challenges (like climate change and searching for new planets); through mass sharing of knowledge in a way that the Ancient Greeks, who dipped their toes in the water with the Great Library of Alexandria, could only dream about; to an examination of the phenomena of social networking – this book is fascinating.

Wikinomics has it detractors. The authors do address this at the end of the book. The opponents see mass collaboration not only producing mediocrity and ignorance rather than wisdom but they see it as the destroyer of IP and ultimately of power and wealth; the ultimate democracy?

Fabulous stuff.

Reviewed by Alan Pollard FBCS CITP, BCS Deputy President



The Network Security Assessment: Know your Network (second edition)

Chris McNab, 504 pp

O'Reilly, £24.99

ISBN: 978-0-596-51030-5

Rating ★★★★☆

This book introduces the tools and techniques used for evaluating the security of networks and services. It aims to provide the readers with tactical and technical knowledge to determine how secure a network is by attempting to probe and exploit it. It serves as an excellent in-depth technical resource for those who continuously strive to protect their networks.

The first chapter sets the scene and gives an overview of the network security assessment methodology. The following chapter familiarises the reader with tools and software that are used at various stages of the book.

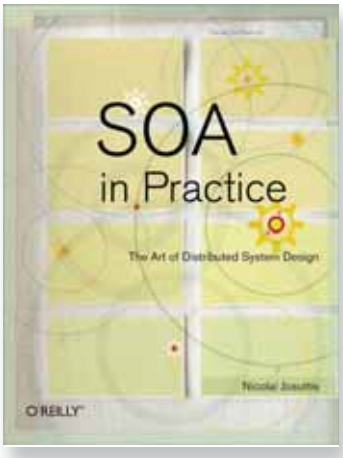
The author then takes the reader on an extensive technical journey, tackling every aspect of a network to highlight potential weaknesses and vulnerabilities that may exist and ways to determine them. The author covers it all, including network enumeration, web services and applications, database and email services, VPNs, various Windows and Unix specific services. At the end of every chapter, a section on appropriate countermeasures discusses means to protect systems from the vulnerabilities.

A chapter worthy of mention is the fourth one, which is one of the best surveys on network scanning and probing techniques I have come across. It covers the various characteristics of IP, ICMP, TCP and UDP protocols used to gather information about networked hosts and services. Scans and probes are discussed in relevant and clear detail along with the various tools available to launch them.

What I really miss in this book is a final concluding chapter. A discussion on the overall strategy needed to carry out a rigorous and effective assessment, particularly for medium to large corporate networks where such an exercise is most needed, could have been very useful.

Network security assessment requires a considerable depth of technical knowledge and an aptitude for such activity. This book allows the reader to gain both. It is up-to-date, detail oriented, and good value for money.

Reviewed by Siraj Shaikh MBCS, research officer, Cranfield University



SOA in Practice: The Art of Distributed System Design

Nicolai M. Josuttis, 324 pp

O'Reilly, £24.99

ISBN 978-0-596-52955-0

Rating ★★★★★

This book is aimed at anyone in a technical role who is new to service oriented architecture (SOA). A major thrust of the book can be summed up by a quote in the preface: 'In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice they are not.' The author learned first hand about the gap between the hype and actual practice of implementing a SOA.

The author explains that SOA is a framework that enables the creation and implementation of flexible business systems and that in the past there have been attempts to try and harmonise distributed systems by implementing them in common architecture.

SOA on the other hand accepts the heterogeneous nature of systems across an organisation and offers a flexible framework for managing these.

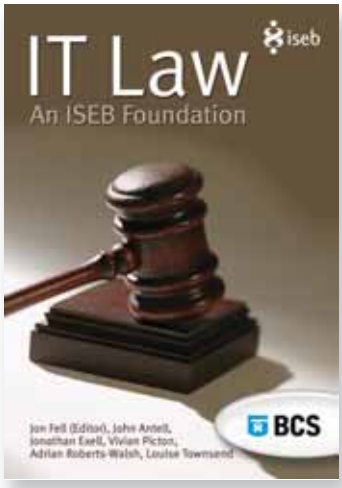
The author quotes Darwin: 'It is not the strongest of a species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones responsive to change.' Specific business functionality is implemented as a basic 'service', and services can be 'orchestrated' and 'choreographed' to form new composite services, and collections of these implement business process workflows.

The first nine chapters cover the basics, and the remaining 11 cover specific aspects of introducing and running SOA.

This book also has a very good table of contents, glossary, index and references, and preface.

I first got involved in a SOA project about two years ago, and I would certainly have benefited from this book had it been available then. This is an excellent book and well worth purchasing, and certainly deserves 5 out of 5.

Reviewed by Kawal Banga MBCS



IT Law: An ISEB Foundation

John Fell et al, 218pp

BCS, £24.95

ISBN: 978-1-902505-80-0

Rating ★★★★☆

The significant changes in information technology over the years have inevitably brought the need for IT professionals and managers to understand legal concepts and issues within IT. This book addresses topics such as contract law, privacy, evidence, intellectual property, employment and security. The topics are covered to a reasonable level of detail.

The collection of topics addressed give an overview of legal concepts and terminology commonly used. Although the Computer Misuse Act 1990 is not covered in as much depth as the Data Protection Act under the privacy chapter, it is also addressed in the accessibility and information security chapter. The validity of the different types of electronic signature is discussed in the evidence chapter. As concerns intellectual property the author discusses patents, licensing and intellectual property rights on the internet.

The book is a rich source of information as extensive use of internet links and references to legislations, cases and books makes it easy to find additional reading. The authors however only discuss legal issues within England and Wales.

Although the sections are clear and concise, this is not a book which is light and easy to read, as it deals with aspects of law in IT, as well as some general aspects of law particularly in relation to employment, and can be very boring.

However, I believe the authors have met their objectives, as it is a book that provides an overview of some of the key legal issues faced by IT professionals today.

In summary, this book is suitable for IT professionals and managers seeking to understand legal issues and pitfalls within the IT sector.

Reviewed by Uma Kanagaratnam MBCS, systems analyst



The Ultimate CSS Reference

Tommy Olsson & Paul O'Brien, 440pp

Sitepoint, $44.95

ISBN: 978-0-9802858-5-7

Rating ★★★★☆

This hardback covers the world of the cascading style sheet (CSS) in over 400, information packed pages.

It takes the reader from an introduction to the CSS principles, through their construction and includes a reference to all the various statements and syntax along with how they are structured and implemented. The latter chapters of the book cover the differences of some of the browser vendors and associated workarounds or hacks.

The book is well very laid out, which makes it good as a learning tool and reference source. This is a refreshing approach to delivering a useful document that will benefit all levels of web developers.

Reviewed by Len Keighley FBCS CITP, data warehouse consultant

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IT Training Awards 2009 – entry date closes very soon

You have just one month to submit your entries for the IT training industry's most prestigious awards event, the IT Training Awards 2009, sponsored by the BCS.

The Awards are now it their 13th year and are firmly established as the benchmark for excellence in the IT training industry, recognising and celebrating outstanding examples of high standards, best practice, innovation and excellence.

The IT Training Awards 2009 will take place in a glittering ceremony at the Dorchester Hotel in London on 5 February 2009 and will be attended by the most influential industry figures.

An IT Training Award is an accolade that is celebrated and respected throughout the IT training industry and can often prove to be the differentiating factor in a purchasing decision in a competitive marketplace. The closing date for entries has been brought forward this year to 30 September 2009.

New category: innovation in training

The Institute of IT Training is delighted to announce the launch of a new category at the IT Training Awards 2009: The Innovation in Training Services Award.

The Innovation in Training Services Award has been introduced to showcase the most effective implementation of the latest developments in learning technology and techniques in the IT training industry. The award is open to any organisation that can demonstrate that they have made a unique and innovative contribution to the delivery of learning services.

The judges will be specifically looking for new or substantially novel ways of engaging learners, stimulating the creation and sharing of knowledge and accelerating organisational learning. To be successful an organisation must clearly show how they have helped to create an environment which fosters learning in the workplace.

Edmund Monk, business development director at IITT, said: 'Our new Innovation in Training Services Award, sponsored by itSMF, will pay tribute to the very best in innovative learning methods and techniques and we are delighted to be able to launch it for the awards in 2009. We believe this new award could attract unprecedented interest and we are excited about the new innovations that will be highlighted through the entries we receive.'

The addition of the Innovation in Training Services Award brings the total number of awards to be presented at the ceremony in February 2009 to 13.

There are categories for individuals and companies to enter, covering training departments, internal and external projects and the flagship award, Training Company of the Year. Previous award winners include Cadbury Schweppes, Assima DACG, Thomson Scientific, Priory Group, BBC Training & Development, QA-IQ, News International, and Firebrand Training. The latter company has won the Training Company of the year award for three years running.

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Henry cycles for Childline

Henry Stewart of Happy Computers took on a massive cycling challenge to raise money for Childline, the Institute of IT Training's chosen charity.

On Sunday 6 July Henry completed the gruelling Etape du Tour. This is a 105 mile cycle ride along one of the most gruelling stages of the Tour de France. It is the same route taken by the professionals, through the Pyrenees negotiating the monumental climb of the Col du Tourmalet before finishing on top of the Hautacam Mountain towering above the pilgrim city of Lourdes.

Henry is hoping to raise £4,000 for Childline and would appreciate your support. You can still sponsor Henry and help increase the amount the Institute raises for Childline by going to **www.justgiving.com/henrystewart**

IIITT showcase in September

There are still a few delegates places available for the IITT's annual showcase conference and exhibition, Training 2008. The event, in association with BCS, takes place on 17 and 18 September at the Oxford Belfry.

As an IITT or BCS member you will still save £100 on your conference booking compared to non-members.

You can book your place online with a credit/debit card via the conference website at **www.trainersconference.co.uk.** Alternatively, contact the Institute on 0845 006 8858 where we can take your booking over the phone.

Free admission to exhibition

As a result of exhibitor and delegate feedback we are opening the Training 2008 exhibition early this year. A dedicated viewing time for IITT members will be available from 3pm until 6pm on 17 September. This will allow members who can't attend the conference access to the exhibitors so they too can network and look at the latest product and service



offerings on show. For further information please contact Justine or Kelly at the Institute on 0845 006 8858.

Exhibitor space available

The Training 2008 exhibition is an excellent opportunity for companies to demonstrate new products and services to a specific target audience and can lead to valuable new contacts and business. There is one exhibitor space still available for exhibitors with packages starting at £1,500. Further information can be found on the conference website at **www.trainersconference.co.uk** or, if you wish to discuss exhibitor options, please contact Ed Monk on 0845 006 8858 or email emonk@iitt.org.uk.

IITT events

The IITT webcast schedule will commence after the summer break this month. Further details of the programme will appear in the members' e-newsletter and on the IITT members' Connect website. If you have any suggestions for a webcasts or if you are keen to be a presenter please contact Tony Moss at tmoss@iitt.org.uk

Regional events

North East Regional Group – the next meeting will be held on 1 September– 7pm for 7.30pm – Gateshead Council Offices. Further information available with the next newsletter.

North West Regional Group (online)

Next online meeting takes place on 18 September – 7.30-9pm via Centra. The presentation title is Image Management with Google Picasa
by Mike Thomas



Clive Shepherd

A new emphasis for live events

If you are an active internet user, then you will have been a witness, if not an active participant, in the dramatic changes that we have seen over the last few years as a result of web 2.0 technologies.

Increasingly everyone is a teacher as well as a learner; nobody knows everything and everyone knows something. As George Siemens pointed out in Knowing Knowledge: 'Mass media and education have been largely designed on a one–way flow model (structure imposed by hierarchy). Hierarchies, unlike networks and ecologies, do not permit rapid adaptation to trends outside of established structure.

Structure is created by a select few and imposed on the many: the newspaper publishes, we consume. The teacher instructs, we learn. The news is broadcast, we listen.

Now that we are entering a two–way flow model, where original sources receive feedback from end users, we need to adjust our models to fit the changed nature of what it means to know. We are co–creators, not knowledge consumers. We are no longer willing to have others think for us.'

And computer games have had their effect too. According to William Winn, '[Digital natives] think differently from the rest of us. They develop hypertext minds. They leap around. It's as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential.'

And, as Mark Prensky makes absolutely clear in his book 'Digital Game–Based Learning' (McGraw–Hill, 2001): 'Traditional training and schooling just doesn't engage them. It's not that they can't pay attention, they just choose not to. What today's learners really crave is interactivity – the rest basically bores them to death.'

These developments have really come home to me lately as I have been participating in the design of a series of face–to–face conference events for the eLearning Network (eLN).

In the past, a typical UK conference event would be designed according to the proportions: 60 per cent ideas; 30 per cent examples; and 10 per cent participation.

By 'ideas' I mean presentations from gurus, experts and thought leaders, primarily abstract in nature. By 'examples' I mean case studies from users, sharing successes and lessons learned. By 'participation' I mean opportunities for attendees to interact with each other to explore the ideas, share their own experiences and make contacts that they can then follow–up after the event.

As you can see quite clearly, the traditional pie is cut heavily in favour of ideas, with only a nominal allowance for participation.

Ideas are important, but they need to be backed up by concrete examples; they also need to be thoroughly explored to ensure their validity and their relevance

But the days when people were content to attend a training course or a conference and just be talked at are fast disappearing. As e–learning professionals at the eLN, we have always been conscious of the importance of meaningful interactivity in the content that we create, but we've not necessarily followed this through face–to–face.

As Kevan Hall of Global Integration stated in the last issue of HCM magazine: 'Passive consumption of information is not a good enough reason to get together these days.'

When so many wonderful resources are available online, you'd have to agree.

So, I'd like to see future live events, whether that's face–to–face or online, divided in the following proportions: 60 per cent participation; 30 per cent examples; and 10 per cent ideas.

Ideas are important, but they need to be backed up by concrete examples; they also need to be thoroughly explored to ensure their validity and their relevance. That requires debate, discussion, reflection, experimentation and feedback. Too many ideas and all you get is cognitive overload – most likely you go away with nothing.



Of course, these proportions are as important in the design of training events as they are for conferences and webinars. Too often, there is an abundance of theory, a few quick demos and nowhere near enough time allocated to practice.

The exposition of theory is best accomplished self–paced; if you're going to get a group together live, it seems plain daft not to take advantage of the situation. People love to talk, to share experiences, to make friends and to explore ideas – all you have to do is let them.

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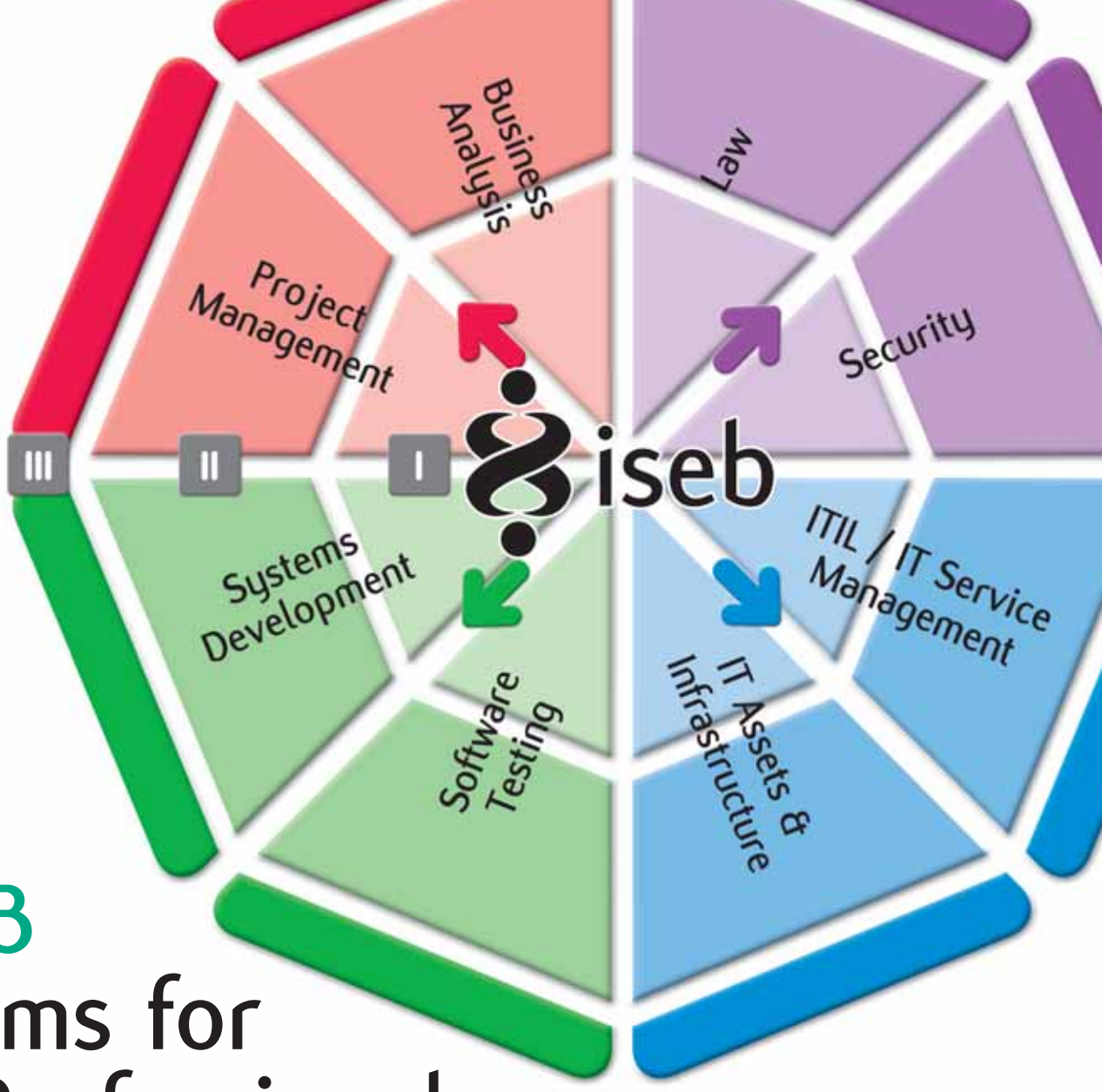
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